

IN BRIEF

Protection of *Geronticus eremita*

In response to my note (Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl. 97: 72) on the protection of the Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* I received information from 49 observers, mainly about the colonies in Morocco, for which I am very grateful. I shall be pleased to continue to receive any data of any sort.

The information shows a diminishing population. Around 1940 there might have been 500 pairs in Morocco. By 1966, of the 38 known breeding colonies, 19 had disappeared. There has been no further information about 6 other colonies since 1967. Cultivation of previously semi-arid feeding areas as well as an increasing disturbance at the breeding sites, seems to have been the cause. Of the remaining 13 colonies, 3 were deserted, but 3 new ones were discovered.

In 1975 I found 198 pairs breeding at 13 colonies, 5 of which (77 pairs) seem to have been unknown. There has been a dramatic decline from 121 pairs in 1975 to 42 pairs in 1978 according to the information sent to me, mainly caused by hunting and disturbance by tourists, as well as by the collection of eggs and young for the animal trade. Age determination of the Waldrapp (Hirsch (1976) Orn. Beob. 73: 225) to distinguish between possible breeding or non-breeding birds outside the colony is of help in observations sent to me.

About 70% of the Moroccan Waldrapp population is present throughout the year. As wintering places, there are probably only 3 preferred areas. For the protection of the breeding places an IUCN/WWF programme will try to establish nature reserves in typical coastal areas, the plains and the High Atlas.

12 August 1978

Udo Hirsch

Address: World Wildlife Fund, Conservation Department, CH 1110 Morges, Switzerland.

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First record in the Seychelles of Northern Pintail

Anas acuta acuta

On 18 Feb 1977 an adult pair of Northern Pintail *Anas acuta acuta* was observed at Mahé Island in the Seychelles. This is, according to Dr C. J. Feare, the first record of Pintail for the Seychelles. They were seen together on a rock in a marshy area, surrounded by mangrove, near Police Bay at the southern point of Mahé Is. Photographs were taken, one of which is to be deposited in the Museum of Zoology of Cambridge University. The winter distribution of Northern Pintail is given as 'south to North Africa, the Nile Valley, Abyssinia, Persian Gulf, India, Ceylon . . .' by P. Scott (1972), and Williams (1963) considers the Pintail to be a 'less common winter visitor to East Africa'.

Ducks are seen fairly frequently in the Seychelles during the northern winter, most of them *Anas querquedula*, but several much larger ducks have also been seen but not identified (C. J. Feare). Penny (1974) lists no ducks in the Seychelles but mentions the record of *Dendrocygna viduata* at Aldabra.

To me it seems most probable that the Pintails were brought the 2,000 km to the Seychelles from East Africa or Abyssinia by the northwest monsoon. There are no islands between the African mainland and the Seychelles except the Amirant Islands about 800 km southwest of the Seychelles.

I wish to thank Dr. C. J. Feare for his information on ducks in the Seychelles and his advice about publishing this record.

References:

Penny, M. 1974. *The Birds of the Seychelles and the Outlying Islands*. Collins: London.

Scott, P. 1972. *A Coloured Key to the Wildfowl of the World*. W. Royle: London.

Williams, J. G. 1963. *A Field Guide to the Birds of East and Central Africa*. Collins: London.

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Address: Framgangen 16, S-831 OO Ostersund, Sweden.

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N. T. Ebenhard

Eggs from the Collections of E. L. Layard

In relation to Brooke's paper (1978, *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 98: 75-80) on nineteenth century seabird eggs in the South African Museum, it may be of interest to note that Layard appears to have been in the habit of conducting extensive exchanges of eggs with other collectors, and many of his are now in the British Museum (Natural History), and probably in other museums as well. In the process of recataloguing the BM(NH) collection, I have found a considerable number of Layard eggs from Ceylon, South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, New Hebrides, New Caledonia and Tonga. Of these, approximately 106 clutches were received directly by this Museum from Layard—a collection from 'South Africa and the Southern Islands' which was received and registered in 1869. Other clutches of his have been received through the collections of Salvin, Tristram, Crowley, Henry Buckley, Rothschild, Gould and James Davidson. It is not at present possible to say how many eggs of Layard's are in this Museum's collection, as the work of recataloguing will take some years to complete.

16 November 1978

Michael Walters

Address: British Museum (Natural History), Tring, Herts.

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BOOKS RECEIVED

Ralling, C. 1978. *The Voyage of Charles Darwin*. Pp. 183. Profusely illustrated in colour. British Broadcasting Corporation: London. £6.75.

An interesting selection of Darwin's autobiographical writings arranged in chronological order, mainly covering the voyage of the Beagle, but also about his education and the development of his scientific and maturing thoughts. The selection is by the producer of the successful BBC 2 television series. The coloured illustrations are of the highest standard.

Goodwin, 1978. *Birds of Man's World*. Pp. 183. Many photographs and line illustrations. Cornell University Press: Ithaca & London. £5.95.

A simple but informative and lucid discussion of the impact of Man on the environment of birds, on birds in towns, on birds fed by Man and on birds introduced. There is an interesting set of observations on bread in the diet of over 25 species discussed individually and a final sensitive glimpse into a 'Future imperfect'.